

I Claim:

1. In a device that alerts a user to an incoming message by activating an acoustic driver, a method for shunting the acoustic driver comprising the steps of:
 - a) detecting the presence of a broadcast squelch signal by monitoring signals that arrive at the device from an emitter; and
 - b) automatically shunting the acoustic driver in response to the detecting step free of any communication back to the emitter.
2. The method as in claim 1, wherein the squelch signal originates extrinsic to the device.
3. The method as in claim 1, including the additional step of activating a vibrator to alert the user of the incoming message while the squelch signal is being detected.
4. The method as in claim 1, wherein the device includes both the acoustic driver and a vibrator, the method including the additional steps of:
 - accessing a memory and retrieving a user-set alert mode; and
 - in response to an incoming message, activating a preselected one of the acoustic driver and the vibrator in accordance with the user-set alert mode retrieved from the memory.
5. The method as in claim 1, wherein the detecting step comprises comparing incoming signals to an expected signal pattern to detect the presence of a squelch signal.

1 6. The method as in claim 1, wherein the detecting step comprises processing incoming
2 signals to extract, when present, an indicium of the presence of the squelch signal and
3 thereby detect the presence of a squelch signal.

1 7. The method as in claim 1, including the additional step of shunting the acoustic driver for
2 a period of time after the broadcast squelch signal is detected.

1 8. The method as in claim 7, wherein the step of shunting the acoustic driver continues for a
2 period of time after the broadcast squelch signal is no longer present.

1 9. For use with a device which shunts an acoustic driver which is otherwise activated to
2 alert a user to an incoming message, a broadcast system comprising:

3 a) a generator which outputs a "squelch" signal having a frequency which, when
4 detected at the device, shunts the acoustic driver;

5 b) an amplifier connected to the generator output to amplify the squelch signal;

6 c) an antenna; and

7 d) a transmitter connected between the antenna and the amplifier,

8 wherein the amplified signal is transmitted from the antenna so as to define a zone of
9 influence within which any said device has its respective acoustic driver shunted.

1 10. The broadcast system as in claim 9, wherein the generator and the amplifier and the
2 transmitter are housed together.

1 11. The broadcast system as in claim 10, wherein the antenna is freely positionable remote
2 from the transmitter.

1 12. The broadcast system as in claim 9, wherein the output of the amplifier has a variable
2 power level setting such that the zone of influence can be varied with changes in the
3 variable power level setting.

1 13. An electronic device of the type which alerts a user to an incoming message by
2 connecting an alert signal to a preselected one of first and second alert devices,
3 comprising:
4 a) a detector which monitors the incoming message to detect the presence of a
5 squelch signal broadcast locally by an emitter and generates a control signal at its
6 output when the squelch signal is detected;
7 b) a switch, operatively connected to the output of the detector, to automatically
8 direct the alert signal to a predetermined one of the first and second alert devices
9 while the squelch signal is being detected,
10 wherein the electronic device operates free of any communications back to the emitter.

1 14. The electronic device as in claim 10, wherein the device is a cellular telephone.

1 15. The electronic device as in claim 10, wherein the device is a pager.

1 16. The electronic device as in claim 10, wherein the device is a personal digital assistant.

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